SILENTDALE

AN ORIGINAL DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

BY THEO. B. BEACH

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in Five Acts

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Cast of Characters

Rev. Mr. Newcommer ..... The new minister

Azariah Tompkins ..... Village Merchant

Ben Hammer ..... Clerk at the store

E. Searl Hanford ..... A pretended gentleman

Bill Manns ..... A trapper

Deacon Goodall ..... A retired farmer

Sylvanus Letterbee ..... Postmaster

E. C. Henderson ..... A banker

Sam ..... Tompkin's colored man

Monroe ..... Stage driver

Willie ..... } ..... Small boys
James ..... }

Holdup ..... A detective

Sarah Tompkins ..... Just returned from boarding school

Amanda Tompkins ..... Wife of Azariah, mother of Sarah

Ruth Ormsbee ..... Village school teacher

Widow Stopwell ..... Well to do. Keeps boarders for company

Ethel Henderson ..... Daughter of E. C. Henderson

Costumes

NEWCOMMER—Act I—At church bell ringing—Wear blue flannel trousers, light colored coat with collar turned up, soft felt hat pulled down. At picnic—Blue flannel suit, white vest and white tie with straw hat.

ACT II—Same make-up except vest color of suit, derby hat.

ACT IV—Strictly clerical Prince Albert dark colored suit, white tie.

TOMPKINS—ACT I—Short linen coat, light colored trousers, loose cut, red colored handkerchief about his neck, straw hat. At picnic—Same trousers black coat, soft black hat, collar and black tie Same make-up in house scene, Third and Fourth Acts.

HAMMER—ACT I—Short linen coat, light colored trousers, no collar. At picnic—Has his Sunday clothes on. Same trousers can be used, but black sack coat, collar and red tie.

ACT IV—Fashionable business suit, neat mixed tie. In street scene—black derby hat.

ACT V—Evening dress of the times, Prince Albert coat, black in color, light colored trousers, clothes to fit well.

HANFORD—ACT II and III—Light colored coat and trousers, wearing leggins, soft hat pulled down, collar and tie. After coming out of store with Tompkins, should have leggins removed, coat collar turned down, hat turned up and looking generally improved in appearance.

ACT IV—Dark colored suit, flashy waistcoat and tie.

ACT V—Same as Act III. Or dress suit.

BILL MANNS—Only one suit—Brown colored jean suit (*clean and new*) and old black hat (soft).

DEACON GOODALL—ACT I—Sunday suit—Black suit, black tie and straw hat (a little large).

ACT II—Same suit except loose fitting light colored coat.

ACT IV nad V—Same as in Act I, except black soft felt hat.

LETTERBEE—ACT I—At the bell-ringing scene—Trousers and shirt sleeves, no hat, stocking feet one trouser's leg rolled up. At picnic—A well worn dark colored, loose fitting suit, no collar, colored handkerchief about neck.

ACT IV—Same make-up, except should appear as if it had met rough usage, coat torn, clothes soiled.

HENDERSON—ACT IV and V—Well dressed in Prince Albert slate colored suit, black tie.

SAM—Any make-up will answer suitable to the part.

ACT V—Well dressed, dark blue suit, brass buttons, collar and tie.

MONROE—Any colored, well worn suit showing several torn places. Old black hat, no collar.

WILLIE AND JAMES—As boys 13 or 14 years old.

SARAH TOMPKINS—ACT I—Light colored summer suit, covered with rain coat, hat.

ACT II and III—Same suit without rain coat.

ACT IV—Evening dress.

ACT V—Evening dress.

AMANDA TOMPKINS—ACT I—Dark colored, clean-up dress, with apron. At picnic—Without apron.

ACT III—Same make-up.

ACT IV and V—Black silk dress.

RUTH ORMSBEE—ACT I—Medium colored, grey or light brown suit.

ACT II and IV—The same will answer.

ACT V—Evening dress.

WIDOW STOPWELL—ACT I, II, III, IV—Black dress. White apron at picnic.

ACT V—Grey suit or brown suit.

ETHEL HENDERSON—ACT IV—Dark blue costume.

ACT V—Evening dress.

Properties Required

ACT I.

Hay rakes, snathes, baskets for in front of store. Luggage for stage and Sarah. Sticks of red candy for Sarah and Amanda. Ladder. Letterbee's notice. Pins. Steel bar for church bell, cannon. Broom for Sam. Tables for picnic. Pail for Manns. Tablecloth in basket. Dishes. Hand bell. Large key for church door. Bag for Manns.

ACT II.

Fish basket for Hanford. Fish rod. Flask for Hanford. Crackers and Cheese. Calling cards for Hanford. Stage money for Hanford. Broom for Sam. Letters for Miss Ormsbee. Peck basket filled with potatoes for Hanford.

ACT III.

Articles for store front (Fall). Bundle for Goodall. Bench in front of store. Note book and pencil for Hanford. Bottle of stimulent for Hanford. Stage money.

ACT IV.

Court papers for Hammer. Letter for Tompkins. Books for table. Violin for Letterbee.

ACT V.

Paper for Henderson. Books for table and Miss Henderson. Satchel for Sam. Mortgage papers for Hammer. Handcuffs for officer. Revolver for officer.

Act One

Scene represents one end of the village green, with streets on two sides and on the end of it. Tompkins' store and the post office on one side of it. Tompkins' residence and the Widow Stopwell's on the other. A lamp post (*street light*) near the post office and one some where on the green—they to be lighted by the colored man Sam (*about the time when it is supposed to be dusk and as Ben Hammer starts for his home*). As the curtain rises there are seen some small boys playing on the green, tossing the new mown hay (*hay made of dyed green excelsior*); there should be a green carpet to represent the green.

Tompkins steps to his stoop as if looking for some one, before he begins to talk. The minister, the school teacher and the boys pass in and out of the post office—saying nothing except words of salutation as they pass. One of the boys slips up back of Tompkins, while he is standing on his stoop and hooks some apples in a basket standing there. The closing up of the store, the going home from the store and the singing on Tompkins' veranda must be a night scene, with stars shining (*if possible*).

The old postmaster and his dame, as also Widow Stopwell and her boarders, step to their doors or stoops as if to listen to the singing at Tompkins'. After the singing ceases and the people go into their houses Sam the colored man puts out the lights, leaving darkness, which quickly changes to early morning light (*that is about three o'clock a. m*).

TOMPKINS—(*discovered at rise*) Well, it seems as if the durn old stage would never cume, and there's Mandy she's gittin' anxious tew. By turn over, if it don't cume pretty soon I'll go besides myself, for Sarah she's cummin' home tonight and it's many, many a month since we have seen her, Ben, Benjamin.

BEN HAMMER—(*coming out of the store*) Yes, Mr. Tompkins.

TOMPKINS—Where dew you 'spose that pesky old stage is? Seems as if it would never git here. Jest step down the road and see if it's in sight, fur I can't wait any longer.

BEN—(*Ben steps to back of stage and looks as if looking down the road*) I think I see the dust of the stage down the road, and it ought to be here soon.

TOMPKINS—That's good, Ben. Seems as if I could not wait to see that gal. Think lots of her, and I'll bet you our Bolton grey rooster, that she'll hug her old dad good and hard when she sees him. She ain't the kind that thinks themselves smart like some of the gals do nowadays, and Ben don't you ever git one of them smart gals. They'll want more money for ribbons and sich than you can earn, and they'll have store bills a starin' you in the face and you will have to pay them with promises. Hoora! Hoora! Here comes the stage. Mandy! Mandy! it's cummin'. Hurry up er I'll git the first hug.

Enter M. (*Monroe comes on to stage from roadway, on right, with grips, sets them down in front of Tompkins' house*)

MONROE—I'll leave the mail at the post office and then I'll help you all off.

(*Enter Sarah Tompkins from road on right*)

TOMPKINS—Hallo, Sarah Tompkins, here's your old dad. How are you. Thought you'd never come. Never so glad tew see you in all my life afore. Gosh, must give you another kiss.

SARAH—Well, father, it does seem so good to see you again. It has been such a long time since I went away, but where's mother? Oh, here she is. Bye, you old dear.

(*Enter Amanda. Coming from her house, where she has been seen watching for the stage*)

AMANDA—Well, well, for the land's sake! If you hain't changed some since I saw you last. You are as big as I am.

SARAH—Yes, mother.

AMANDA—Come on into the house, you must be awful hungry, and I have a nice supper for you, but guess it's cold now, for I have waited so long for Monroe's old stage; bet you never hurried them old horses a mite, ought to give them the lash. That's what they need.

SARAH—No, mother, I think a few oats would be better for them. Oh, mother, it does seem so good to be at home again, and I am so hungry. What have you for supper, I can not wait for it.

AMANDA—Oh, I have got some new rye bread and I have a big strawberry cake for you. Pa had Sam pick the berries today, as they will be the last we will get, and said to be sure and make you a cake out of them.

(*Exit Sarah and Amanda into the house*)

(*While the Tompkins are talking Monroe is busy bringing in baggage for Sarah*)

(*Ben has also been helping Monroe with baggage*)

MONROE—Hope your daughter won't come every day, Tompkins. She's got more duds than a dozen passengers ought to have; and I guess I will have to charge you a little more for them. I just set them down by the door and Ben and that black rascal of yours can lug them in.

TOMPKINS—(*As if a little angry*) Well, by gosh, Monroe, you can charge jest what you please, I'll pay you, and you needn't kick, you'll get all's that due you, and the next time Sarah Tompkins goes away you won't be asked to carry her.

MONROE—Hold on Tompkins, you need not get excited, hold your temper and you will enjoy yourself a deal more (*Exit Tompkins to store*).

SARAH—(*Sarah from door of her home*) Wait, Ben, let me help you; those trunks are too heavy for you. How you have grown; such a niee, big fellow. How is your mother, Ben? Tell her I will be up and see her just as soon as I get a chance.

BEN—I will, Miss Tompkins.

SARAH—Please, don't call me Miss Tompkins. I have been called that long enough and when I am here in Silentdale my name is Sadie Tompkins.

BEN—No, Miss Sarah, the trunks are not very heavy and I can handle them, and here comes (*enter Sam from Tompkins' house*) Sam and he will help me. Mother, she is not very well now-a-days,——I don't think she will be here with us very long.

SARAH—That is too bad, Ben, and I am very sorry for you. Mother wrote me that she was ailing.

(*Amanda now appears at door of her home*)

AMANDA—Sarah, what have you in all of those trunks? Guess Pa will have to build on to the house for you. You must have a lot of dresses I have never seen. We'll look them over as soon as we get time (*Exit Amanda and Sarah to house*).

(*Ben now near the store. Tompkins speaking from front of his store*)

TOMPKINS—Well, Ben, got the duds in all rite did you? Pretty heavy I suppose; at least old Monroe said they were, but mind ye, he don't put his hand on them agin. I'll shut up the store tonite and you can go home a lettle earlier, and you need not cume down Monday as I'll not open the store the Fourth. But be sure and be on hand at the picnic. The new parson he's goin' tew deliver the oration and I may say sumthing myself; that is if Deak Goodall 'll give me a chance, he generally wants to say it all himself. Good night, Ben.——Hey, Ben, here I nigh on to forgot you, oughter say sumthing when I don't pay you, you'll want it for the Fourth.

BEN—Thank you, Mr. Tompkins. I thought you had forgotten it. Good night (*Exit Ben to road, left*).

TOMPKINS—That Ben's a darn good boy and he'll make his mark someday. Well, here comes (*enter Mrs. T. and Sarah, now coming out of their home, crossing towards store*) Sarah over to help her old daddy close up jest like she used to before she went away tew school; yes, and Mar (*enter Amanda*) she's cummin' tew.

SARAH—Well, daddy. thought I would to come over and help you close up the store again, bets you have crackers and cheese there jest as you used to, and don't you remember how I used to slip in and get a stick of red candy out of the box in the old show case and how you used to say, Saddie, Saddie, I'll tell your mother if you don't stop pinching the candy? Come on in and see if I can't find a stick now, bet I can. Any mice in the store now, daddy? (*Sarah and Tompkins enter store for a moment or so leaving Amanda looking into the store door. Sarah and Tompkins return. Trio now together*). Say, mother, this is the same old candy, tastes better than ever and better than all the Kibbies' I have eaten. Here, Mam's a stick for you and its licking good too.

AMANDA—Well, we'd better be going home for tomorrow's the Fourth, and say, Sarah, you will have to hear our new minister.

(*Tompkins, Amanda and Sarah cross green towards their home*)

TOMPKINS—That's right Sarah, you will and you will like him tew. He's way ahead of the old parson.

SARAH—I know, but Mr. Batchley was such a dear old man, and we all loved him so.

TOMPKINS—Jess so, but I'll bet you can love the new man a durn sight

better. He's going to deliver the oration on the green at the Fourth July celebration. That is if the old deacon 'll keep still. Say, Mandy,—dew you know that I think the parson's gittin' a leetle sweet on skule teacher, for he's up to the skule a good deal, lately, and the teacher—you know her, Sarah, she's Miss Ormsbee, best looking girl in town, and——

AMANDA—Now, Azariah Tompkins, that girl is good looking, but she's not a mite better than I was at her age.

TOMPKINS—So you were dear, and you'r prutty good looking now. But as I was sayin' she always meets him at the post office and walks home with him, so Letterbee says, and he knows what's going on around there, he's the best posted man in town.—Gosh he's forgot to shut up his office (*now arrives at his home*). Bet he's asleep in there. I'll jess step over and wake him up (*goes toward P. O. and when in front of it shouts*). Letterbee! Letterbee! Wake up there, and close up your shop. It's nigh on to bedtime.

(*Enter Letterbee appearing rubbing his eyes as if sleepy*)

LETTERBEE—Yes, Tompkins, gess I was asleep. Thanks for waking me up. I'll close up all right now. Much obliged to ye (*Letterbee looks around half dazed. Returns to his post office, closing door. Exit Letterbee*).

TOMPKINS—(*When returning to his home*) That's a good joke on Letterbee. Gess he got tired out gossiping 'bout the new minister and the skule teacher. He'd better tend to his own affairs part of the time.

(*Tompkins returns to his own home where Amanda and Sarah are awaiting him*)

SARAH—Let us sit down on the steps (*party are seated on stoop*) a few minutes and enjoy the evening, it is such a perfect night, an ideal one for star gazing. Do you know that when I was away astronomy was my favorite study. I worked to master it. It was quite hard at first, but as I advanced I became more and more interested in it until it was my most delightful study, and

AMANDA—And

SARAH—And many a night I have remained up until long after midnight looking at the stars, working hard to learn more of them and endeavoring to solve their mysterious presence. One night I sat up at the window so long that I dropped asleep with my head resting on the window sill, sleeping until I heard the chapel bell ringing six o'clock in the morning.

AMANDA—It was a good thing for you that your mother didn't know of it or you would have heard from her.

SARAH—And don't you know the professor would often go with us to the observatory and we would look through the large telescope there at the stars. Some night I will tell you the names of them, how large they are and how far away they are from us. Sometimes I seem to think that there are people living in those bodies just as we are living here, and that perhaps we may some day be there with them, and our little Willie, he too may be—There, there, Daddy, don't cry. We did not study stars all the time. You ought to have seen us when I opened the box from home. The girls would come in and we would have so much fun, and such a fine time. There daddy,—you feel better now, don't you?

TOMPKINS—Yes, I am all right now. Sarah do you know any of those songs we used to sing out here on the veranda when you were at home. If Sam's round we'll jess have one. Mandy, see if Sam's in the kitchen.

(*Amanda steps into house and quickly returns*)

AMANDA—Yes, here he is.

(*Enter Sam, coming out of house*)

TOMPKINS—Sam, we're going to try one of the old songs. Are you in good trim?

SAM—Yes, Massa Tompkins, never's better. But if I sing then you's jest got to sing my old favorite for me; "Down on the Swanee ribber."

SARAH—Yes, Sam, we will sing that first if you wish.

(*Song by Tompkins, Amanda, Sarah and Sam*)

AMANDA—Well of all things, did you hear the church bell (*bell rings*) strike eleven? Come every one of you and get to bed (*Tompkins, Amanda and Sarah go into house*).

(*Exit Sam*)

(*All is very quiet. Sam goes and blows out the street lights. Shortly the boys appear near the church as if bent on ringing the church bell*)

(*Enter Ben, from road left*)

BEN—That you Sam?

SAM—Yes, Massa Hammer, and here's (*enter Willie and James, two small boys*) Willie and James, but where am de parson?

BEN—He said he would be here with the key. Willie (*starts to go*) run down the road and see if you can find him. Oh, here he is now!

(*Enter Newcommer, coming from Stopwell house*)

NEWCOMMER—Say, boys, I have lost my church keys, and how can we get in? We must ring in the Fourth someway.

BEN—Sam, there's a ladder in back of the store. Get it quickly and one of us will go up it and go in through the belfry.

(*Sets the ladder up against the belfry and one of the small boys goes up it and opens the door from the inside*)

NEWCOMMER—Who will go up it?

SAM—I's be the one to go up it.

BEN—No, Sam, you'r too heavy, the ladder's not strong. James, he is the lightest, let him go up. Now, James, after you get in go down and open the door for us, but be careful not to fall (*James goes up ladder*).

(*As they are standing about the church door waiting for it to be opened, they discover something white on the door—strikes a match and reads aloud*)

NOTICE!

ALL PERSONS ARE FORBID TO RING THIS MEETING HOUSE BELL AFORE FIVE O'CLOCK ON THE MORNING OF JULY FOURTH.

Per order,
SYLVANUS LETTERBEE,
Postmaster, Sexton and Tythingman.

(*Ben takes notice off door of church and tacks it on Letterbee's door, returning to church*)

NEWCOMMER—See, boys, it is only three o'clock, and I guess that we are in for it, but I will see you through, only give me the first chance at the rope (*Church door open and party go inside*).

Ding—dong—ding.

(*Enter Letterbee from post office, in half-dressed state—hurries toward church*)

LETTERBEE—Well, I'll bet this noise will stop, or my notice is no good. (*Enters church for a moment—boy slides down ladder, others rush out of church door and disappear*)

LETTERBEE—(*Now coming out of the church*) Next year if they ring that bell they'll walk over Letterbee, for I'll stay in the church all night. They think I don't know them, but I do. There's the Thurston twins, they ought to be at home with their poor, sick mother. That nigger of Tompkins, he's a dark spot in this community.—Ben Hammer, and Ben ought to do better, for he was brought up by his mother,—and the new minister, he was there too, and who would have ever thought he would have been in such scrape as this, but you can't tell much about these *new comers* (*now at his own door, observes the notice now tacked there*). If some one has not tacked the notice on my own door. That's an insult; and I'll bring it up at the church meeting next week. They'll hear from Letterbee yet (*exit Letterbee to his home*).

(*Enter Ben, Sam and the two boys with cannon, place it on green, load and fire it*)

SAM—Massa Hammer, just you let me touch it off. We'll wake 'em all up.

(*Ben appears as if to fire cannon*)

BEN—Get back boys! Get back, I say.

BANG.

SAM—What am dat? Golly, it am de parade.

(*Enter boys dressed in grotesque fashion, parade twice around the green*)

(*Exit all, right*)

(*Re-enter Sam with broom*)

SAM—I'se just done got something to do to clean up this yer dear briss, so as to have dis yer green in shape fur de picnic dis afternoon. For rite hear do we have the feed for this occasion.

(*Enter Tompkins*)

TOMPKINS—(*Speaks from his own house*) Most through there sam? Mandy's got something for you to do in the kitchen. Hurry up you rascal. (*Exit Tompkins*).

SAM—Yes, Massa Tompkins, I'se cummin' (*exit Sam going into Tompkins' house*).

(*Enter Ben, Sam, Willie and James, right*)

(*Ben and the boys bring in and set up the tables for the picinc. Sam follows them in and helps*)

SAM—Juss you look down the road and see who am cummin' to dis yer picnic,—none but old Bill Manns. What you 'spose brings him hear?

(*Enter Bill Manns from road left*)

BEN—Hallo, Bill! Coming to the picnic?

BILL MANNS—Yes, the parson was up thar to the cabin tother day, and says he: Now, Bill, I want you to come down to the picnic, we are to heve a fine time and I know you will enjoy it. Says I. Gess not, parson. Am a too much skerred of wimmen to be thar; but says he. You must promise me you will come, and so I did and so I am har, body and soul, and if you don't want me, say so, and I'll slide fur the woods (*Starts to go*).

ALL—No, no Bill, we want you to stay.

BEN—Here, Bill, take this pail and go down to the spring for water to make lemonade of. (*Exit Bill Manns with pail*).,

SAM—Massa Ben! Am you gwine to make de red kind, same dat Massa Tompkins hab in de back room of de store, de sort dat hab de red oil in it?

BEN—Only the plain kind, Sam. No sticks in this.

SAM—Den I don't want dat kind; you can give my share to Bill Manns, he am temperance. He am.

(*Enter Widow Stopwell*)

(*Widow Stopwell comes from her home with basket on her arm containing tablecloth and articles to set tables with*)

WIDOW STOPWELL—Good morning, all! Am I the first lady here?

ALL—Good morning, Mrs. Stopwell.

BEN—Yes, Mrs. Stopwell, you seem to be the first lady here, but the others will be here soon. We have the tables up, and Bill Manns has gone for the water.

WIDOW S.—Bill Manns. He here?

BEN—Yes, the minister invited him to come. So, now, as we have done our part we will go home and dress for the picnic. Hope it will not rain.

(*Exit Ben, Sam, Willie and James, road left*)

(*Enter Amanda*)

AMANDA—H'w do. Thought I would be here on time, but had so much to do, couldn't get here a bit earlier. Looks a mite like rain. Hope 'twont. How's the parson and the school teacher getting on? A little sweet on tother I see. Letterbee says 'twill be a match, but I don't believe it. That school teacher is a mite gone on herself. But there's others just as good looking as she is. Sarah, she's home now, you know, and—

WIDOW S.—Here comes the girls now, and we will soon have the tables in order. (*Enter Miss Ormsbee and Sarah, coming from their home*).

MISS ORMSBEE—Ladies, you are very smart to have the tables ready so soon, and they look so nicely. Don't you think so, Miss Tompkins?

SARAH—Yes, quite so, and if it does not rain, no doubt we will have a most enjoyable time.

(*Enter Manns*)

(*Bill Manns looks from the rear, but on seeing the ladies, cannot get up courage to enter; he makes several attempts, finally rushes in, sets down the water, spilling it on the floor*)

MANNS—Thar's your warter.

(*Enter Newcommer from Stopwell house, arrives at tables same time that Manns does*)

NEWCOMMER—How do you do, Manns? (*Steps up and shakes hands with Manns*) Glad to see you here. Ladies, Mr. Manns.

(*Bill makes terrible attempt to bow*)

(*Ladies all recognize him*)

NEWCOMMER—Well, ladies, tables all ready, and it's nearly time for the picnic—am afraid we will be showered upon. The clouds look threatening.

(*Minister steps up to Miss Ormsbee and apparently they are greatly interested in each other—the Tompkins watch them closely*)

SARAH—(*To the widow—aside*) I wish you would introduce me to the minister, I would like to meet him ever so much.

WIDOW S.—Here he comes towards us now, and I will be happy to favor you. (*Introduces Miss Sarah to the minister*).

(*Enter Ben, Sam and Willie and James from road, left*)

(*Newcommer and Sarah together near front of stage*)

NEWCOMMER—I am highly pleased to make your acquaintance, Miss Tompkins, as I have heard your name mentioned so frequently, that already I had commenced to feel as if we were old acquaintances

(*Enter Deacon Goodall from road, right, greeting all present*)

SARAH—How delightful to think that we now seem like old friends, and I trust our friendship will increase with our acquaintanceship.

(*Miss Ormsbee watches the pair rather closely*)

(*Steps to the platform and calls the gathering to order*)

DEACON GOODALL—As this is the time for or exercises to begin we will open by singing. Our first song will be "The Star Spangled Banner." Miss Ormsbee will sing the solo and all will join in on the chorus.

SONG.

DEACON G.—According to the program the oration is to be the next, but as the clouds seem to threaten so—I think it best to transpose the program somewhat and have our lunch now, and then should it rain adjourn to the church for the oration.

TOMPKINS—I don't. Here's the place for the oration, rain or no rain.

NEWCOMMER—As there seems to be a difference of opinion, I would suggest that the question of having the oration delivered in the church after the lunch be decided by vote.

DEACON G.—Very good suggestion. Those in favor of having our lunch first and the oration afterwards in the church, will say yes.

(*Several*)—Yes—Yes.

Those opposed by saying No.

TOMPKINS—No.

MANNS—Naw.

DEACON G.—The ayes have it and we will now proceed with the lunch, but as the tables are not quite ready enjoy yourselves the best you can until the ringing of the bell.

(*All except Mrs. Tompkins, Widow Stopwell, Miss Ormsbee, who are working at the tables, enjoy themselves, as if killing time, waiting for the tables. The minister and Miss Sarah have wandered away from the others*)

SARAH—I don't like that Miss Ormbee's singing. I do not understand why it is that you think she is such an excellent singer. There is most certainly room for cultivation and improvement.

NEWCOMMER—Do you think so? Now, I think I understand music to a certain extent, and I must give the young lady credit for doing quite nicely. She has accepted an offer to sing in one of the churches at Benton, the largest in the county, and I trust that you will not criticise too much until you hear her again.

(*Newcommer and Sarah go back toward the tables. The bell (hand bell) sounds All sit down, except Manns, who stands as if waiting a special invitation, and Miss Ormsbee, who has wandered to the front of the stage or end of the green*)

MISS ORMSBEE—Why did I stay to this picnic, it's a horrid affair. I should have gone home Saturday, and that Tompkins' girl did watch me so closely I could not sing——No more Silentdale picnics for me.

NEWCOMMER—Mr. Manns, here is a place for you, and Miss Ormsbee, have you forgotten us?

MISS ORMSBEE—Perhaps so, but I am not the only one who forgets.

NEWCOMMER—Yes, I noticed that Mr. Manns had forgotten us. Every one enjoy yourselves and have a good time. I shall try to enjoy myself with the rest of you. I think when together like this we should be as one and forget our differences.

TOMPKINS—Parson, am sorry we could not have heard your oration first.

MANNS—So be I.

AMANDA—Azariah, I would not discuss that now. I voted agin you.

LETTERBEE—So did I.

MANNS—Wall, I didn't.

(*The thunder has been heard during the table scene, and the shower is upon them*)

BEN—It's already commencing to rain, and I'll step over and open the church door for you.

LETTERBEE—No, you needn't, I'll do that myself. I am sexton. You done your share of church opening this morning.

BEN—What's that you say, better know your right first, prove it if you can.

LETTERBEE—Well, I can, for I saw you out of my window, and what's more, the parson was with you. A nice state of affairs, ain't it?

SEVERAL—What, the minister ringing the bell.

(*The rain now comes and all rush for the church, and in their hurry knock the table down, etc. Miss Ormsbee goes to her home*)

(*Manns stays a minute, looking at the tables, making quick grab, filling his bag and running down the road, saying as he goes*)

MANNS—No church for me.

CURTAIN.

Act Two

Scene 1—Scene in woods supposed to be near Bill Manns' hut. Manns is seen lazily idling—talking to himself.

Scene 2—To represent the reverse end of the green at Silentdale. The church which appears in Scene 1 not to show. In its place a landscape view to be used. A settee to be placed near the front of stage, on the green.

(*Discovered at rise seated on stump, left*)

MANNS—Wall, things seem to change a little around har, but they are pretty slow down to the "Dale," and since Ben went away they have been worse than ever. Let me see, that's 'bout three years ago, and who'd ever thought he'd stayed so long, probably got a gal that keeps him there. I used to have one myself, that's years and years ago. But it seems as if it was only yisterday when they laid her to rest 'neath the old willow tree. If she'd lived Bill Manns would not been here all these years. Things would be brighter and I would be happier, but when she died I bade the world good-bye, forever (*Bill sobs and feels badly*). But I can't do this, it'll make me sick, does every time I git to thinking—Ben was the life of Silantdale, and he was the best boy that ever stood in that town. See what he done for his poor old mother, and how he took care of her till she died, and now he's saved up and set up a monument in the graveyard. Tompkins, he'll steal it if he don't screw it down. But Ben, he got a notion in his head that the town was too small for him, so he started out. Wanted to be something. He took a great, great risk. See the risk I tuk when I lit into these woods more'n twenty odd years ago. No one knows whar I came from and no one ever will.—I don't think Ben would have gone if it hadn't been for the "Deak" and the "Widder." They kept puttin' it into his head to do something and kept tellin' him that Tompkins' whiskey shop's no place fur him, and I gess they were about rite. Gess it mite helped my bank account some ef I'd let him alone.——He's got every cent I've seen since I've bin har, but it's jest as well, ef he'd not got it sum one else wud.—But it's too bad to think that he scopped all Ben's property, tuk his old home and all he had. But Ben says he'll git it back some day, but I gess not. Tompkins' too slick to be caught napping. He's a sharper—and you have got to git up early to git ahead of the old man.——But they say he's lost sum lately, but he's got enough yit; but things may change arter all, they do sumetimes———but it don't make much difference with me, I'm no account anyway—nothing but a poor old——

(*Enter Hanford, right*)

HANFORD—How do you do sir. Hope I don't intrude!

MANNS—Wall—I do all rite and the woods are as free to you as myself.—I stay har and mind my own "biz" and you'll have to do the same ef you stay.

HANFORD—My good fellow you hardly seem to understand me. I don't wish to disturb you, neither do I wish to stay here. I was simply fishing down the stream and am now looking for the village somewhere in this vicinity, where I can find something to eat.—So can you tell me how far it is to town and if there is a hotel there?

MANNS—Silentdale's is a little way dawn the stream (*Points left*). Thar's no hotel thar, but you can git cracker and cheese at Tompkins' store, —and something to wash it down with, ef you wish, and I kinder think you luk as ef you sort of wished it.

HANFORD—Thank you my good fellow. I think I will find the store, but the crackers and cheese will seem somewhat dry. As to the wash about which you were talking, will this (*takes flask from his pocket, drinks and hands it to Bill*) answer? Can you use it?

MANNS—I kin. All of it.

HANFORD—And these fish you can have, they are beauties (*Manns looks at the fish in the basket*).

MANNS—Stranger! See har, you jest keep the basket, but don't ever take those things into town with you.—They'd run you out, and you orter be arrested for taking them out the warter.—You don't know how to fish.—Jest sich fellows as you spile the stream.

HANFORD—Well, we won't argue that point and I guess I'll throw them back into the stream.

MANNS—I jest gess you won't, and thars the difference. You bury the fish, and don't throw them into that stream. Do you har?

HANFORD—Oh, yes, I'll bury the fish (*guess I had better or get buried myself*). Well, my man—

MANNS—No, it ain't, my Mann, it's Bill Manns. That's who I are.

HANFORD—Well, Bill Manns, if you wish. I am thankful to you for your kindness and I will now be obliged to say good-bye. Perhaps we may meet again some day.—Well, good day, sir.

(*Exit Hanford, left* 1 *E*)

MANNS—Good day—Wall that fellow's appearance I don't like—Thar's sumthing 'bout him that's agin me.—He's a smarty kind of chap.—Think's he know'es it all.—He'd knowed more ef he'd thrown those fish back into the stream.

(*Exit Manns, right* 1 *E.*)

(*Manns wanders out of sight and disappears. The scene now changes, showing Silentdale green. Hanford, supposed to have followed down the stream, now enters the town stopping in front of the store, walks by and returns, finally steps to the store door and speaks to the young lady inside*)

(*Enter Hanford, left*)

HANFORD—Good afternoon! I am somewhat hungry, and have you anything in the store that will satisfy a craving appetite? I could eat anything at the present time.

(*Enter Sarah from store, stands in doorway*)

SARAH—Nothing but some crackers and cheese, sir; will those answer?

HANFORD—Well, I suppose they will have to answer, if its the best you have. It's better than nothing when one's half starved.

(*Exit Hanford, steps into the store, gets his lunch and quickly returns to the stoop. Sarah follows him to store door; they now continue their conversation*)

(*Enter Sarah to front of store on stage*)

SARAH—Am sorry, sir, that we could not furnish you with a more elaborate lunch. But you must remember that the stock of a country store for such occasions is hardly comparable to that of a city restaurant. You seem to have been on a fishing expedition. May I inquire what success?

(*Enter Tompkins*)

(*Is now seen crossing the green as if coming from his own house, arriving at his store where Sarah and Hanford are standing*)

TOMPKINS—How'd do, stranger—Glad tew see yew—bean fishing I see—got nuthing—you orter knowed mor'en tew try tew catch these fish 'round here with that kind of a huk—you city fellers don't know every thing yit—but you'll larn if you stay 'round here long. If you want to ketch fish go up and see Bill Manns, he'll larn you—Better come into the store with me—You luk a lettle thirsty, and sumthing to wash down those crackers and cheese won't hurt you—Had'em nigh on tew six months.

HANFORD—(*Aside*) (*Yes, I thought so, they would pass for army hard tack all right*) I don't care if I do.

(*Exit Tompkins and Hanford*)

(*Both enter the store, soon returning, wiping their lips—Sarah remaining outside*)

SARAH—What a fine looking gentleman, I wish I knew his name. Perhaps he will stay in town for a day or so, if so we may become acquainted.

(*Enter Tompkins and Hanford*)

TOMPKINS—(*Now coming out of the store*) Wall, you kin't git out of town tonite, the stage goes down in the morning but I'll take you over to the widder's, prap's she'll keep you.—Sarah you jess watch the store till we git back (*starts with Hanford to cross the green towards the widow's*) You see stranger, I haint no clerk now, can't git one to stay over a week at a time, since Hammer left some three years ago. He was a durn fule fer going, but he would go, but he'll be back looking for a job fore he gits trough, but he won't git it. You jess stay here and I'll see what the widder says (*steps to the widow's door and knocks*) Widder, can you keep this gentleman over night; says was expecting his team here tew meet him, but taint cum, so he's got tew stay sumwheres.

(*Enter Mrs. Stopwell, standing in her doorway*)

WIDOW S.—Who is he?

TOMPKINS—Dunno, never seed him afore, but he's a gentleman. I can see it in him.

WIDOW S.—(*Looks him over*) No, sir, I cannot. I don't keep strangers in my house. You will have to look elsewhere.

(*Tompkins steps back to where Hanford has strayed*)

(*The widow then continues to herself*)

That Tompkins must think this is a public house and he can bring here who ever he pleases, but he will find he can't, and what's more, I would not accommodate him. I think less of him than I did. Don't think he ever had an honest hair in his head, and to think he stole Ben's property, but Ben will get it back some day—That gentleman he speaks of, never seen him before, but while on the surface he appears as one, underneath he may be a scoundrel.—I don't like his looks. He's bringing no good luck to this place.

(*Exit Widow Stopwell*)

(*Tompkins on way back with Hanford to the store*) Well, the widder won't keep you—She's a lettle cross about something. You see Deak Goodall and the widder's going to hitch up, going tew git married soon, they say, and may be they have had a little tilt or so, and that's what's the matter with her, but she can't keep you—But we'll go back to the store.

HANFORD—That's rather hard lines.—I suppose it would be out of the question to ask you to keep me for the night?

TOMPKINS—By gosh, I will! I aint the kind to see a man stay out all night (*now back to the store*) Sarah, we're agoing to keep this man over nite. Take him over tew the house and tell Mar tew luk arter him.

SARAH—I shall introduce him to mother as Mr. —?

TOMPKINS—Dunno—Stranger, I fogot to ask ye your name. What may it be?

HANFORD—My name is Hanford (*hands Sarah a card*), E. Searls Hanford.

SARAH—(*Aside*) (*It reads and sounds well. There is something in a name.*)

TOMPKINS—This is my daughter, Mr. Hanford.—Sarah, jess show Mr. Hanford over tew the house and tell Mar tew take care of him.

(*Exit Tompkins to store*)

(*Sarah and Hanford now cross green towards the Tompkins' house and seemingly are greatly interested in each other. They converse during the walk*)

HANFORD—Miss Tompkins, I am highly pleased with your beautiful village and its surroundings, an ideal spot for one who is burdened with city cares to rest and enjoy the blessings of quietude.—But you living in it continually must find it somewhat prose and weary some, and perhaps wish at times that you were away from its monotony.

SARAH—Oh, no, Mr. Hanford, I enjoy it here, and am not looking for a change. The scenes to me are most beautiful.—The old trees.—The rocks.—The hills—and even the rivulet so peacefully winding its way oceanward, between them, are all to me objects of the deepest admiration, and have with me a most sacred place. I was for a number of years away at school, and while there I enjoyed the hospitalities of the city, but was glad to say goodbye, leave all its attractions behind and return to that rest of which you spoke, here in this silent dale.

HANFORD—Perhaps I could accustom myself to its surroundings and content myself to remain here the balance of my days, but in order to do so

would wish the best of company to go with them, and no doubt that in making up my list I could include you in it.

SARAH—Possibly, but I think you would have no trouble in finding the best of company without including myself.—This is our home and this is my mother.—Mother, Mr. Hanford, who father has invited to become our guest for the night.

(*Enter Amanda, standing on stoop to her house*)

AMANDA—Glad to see you, sir, walk in. You seem somewhat tired and worn (*Exit Amanda, Hanford, Sarah, going into house*)

(*The stage lights are turned off for a moment or so to appear as if the night had passed*)

(*Enter Sam from Tompkins' house, rubbing his eyes and appearing as if he had just got up*)

SAM—'Spose I am to clean up this yer stoop, so as to have it in order, as the Missus say she want ebrything to look span clean, cause that yer fellar who stayed over night, and who done all that yer singing last evening, am gwine to quit this yer town this very morning. She say he hab heaps of money and we must treat him with a deal of respect. I'll treat him if I ketch him in de right place, that's what I do. Cause he called me a nigger last night.—I'se no nigger, I just show him who's he talkin' to—I'se just as white as he am. That's what I am.—The parson, he didn't stay long last night, gess he didn't like him better than I did. But Miss Sarah, she'd like to eat him up, and the old man he just make a fool of himself over that low down white trash. But—

(*Enter Amanda, to door*)

AMANDA—Sam, hurry up, I want you in the kitchen.

SAM—Yes, Missus Tompkins, I am coming, I am.

(*Exit Sam to house*)

(*Departure of stage for Benton*)

(*Enter Hanford, Tompkins, Sarah, Amanda, from Tompkins house*)

HANFORD—Well, Mrs. Tompkins (*offering her a bill*), if you will not accept anything for your trouble I do not see how I can ever repay you, I am most certainly under great obligation to you, and to you, Miss Tompkins. I feel under two-fold obligations as you surely are a success at entertaining visitors, and I especially enjoyed your musical part of the program, and trust I may have an opportunity to hear more of it.

SARAH—Thank you, Mr. Hanford, you are quite complimentary in your remarks, but I hardly think I am deserving of them. As to our meeting you again I trust we may see you at no distant day in our village, and when here do not forget to call upon us, our door is open to you.

TOMPKINS—That's so—you'll find the latch string always hanging, but say, Hanford, ef you go fishing again let me give you the right kind of a huk (*All laugh*).

(*Enter Monroe, from road right*)

MONROE—Come, hurry up, stranger. Can't hold this stage for courting bees. It's got to leave on time if it gets there on time, and it's now time to start, so, all aboard.

(*Exit Hanford*)

(*Exit Amanda*)

(*Hanford starts for the stage. All say good-bye, etc. Mrs. Tompkins goes into the house. Sarah and her father start for the store*)

TOMPKINS—A durn nice fellar, that. Hope he'll show up agin some day. —Looks like a moneyed man.

SARAH—Yes, he seemed quite agreeable, but I have seen others I liked just as well.

TOMPKINS—You'r too fussy 'bout your beau, Sarah. Bets you he's worth fifty of that minister. Ministers never have any money.

(*Exit Tompkins to store*)

SARAH—Well, we will not argue.—I am going to the post office and then home (*Exit to post office, returns quickly*)

(*Sarah on her way back from the post office meets the minister who is on his way to the office*)

(*Enter Newcommer, from Stopwell house*)

NEWCOMMER—Good morning, Miss Tompkins; up early, I presume to enjoy the morning air?

SARAH—Yes—No—Well, I—we were up to see our visitor depart. He boarded the stage for Benton.

NEWCOMMER—Oh, I see! But, by the way, what was his name? I did not grasp it when you introduced me last evening.

SARAH—Mr. Hanford, E. Searles Hanford, a pretty name, is it not?

NEWCOMMER—Yes, I suppose so.

SARAH—I am sorry you did not remain, you would have enjoyed him very much, indeed.

NEWCOMMER—Perhaps so.—But I thought I would not intrude.—An old friend, I presume?

SARAH—No. Unknown to us until yesterday.—You see, he sort of wandered in. Had been fishing down the stream and expected his team to meet him here but it did not. So some one had to keep the poor fellow and it was our lot, and I am glad it was.—You ought to have heard him play the piano. We sang several duets together. He is a fine tenor.

NEWCOMMER—Oh—I supposed you had been acquaintances for years.—That is, judging from the familiarity.—You should beware of strangers.

SARAH—Mr. Newcommer, I fail to see why it should trouble you as to how we entertain guests. You certainly have no cause to complain.

NEWCOMMER—No, Miss Tompkins, you are right, you have always treated me nicely, and I am making no complaint, but I have you at heart and perhaps for your own welfare I spoke. If I have offended you—pardon me.

SARAH—No, you have done nothing wrong.—Neither have I.—Good morning.

(*Exit Sarah to home*)

NEWCOMMER—I love that girl as dearly as my own life—Perhaps I was wrong in speaking as I did—But I could not help it. I did not like his looks, and I only wished to put her on guard.—There seemed something about him that was hard to read. He may be able to play the piano, and

he may sing high notes, but he might be a scoundrel for all that.—I only trust he will not appear in this place again.—

(*While talking Newcommer strolls toward the settee, and is seated—as if in deep thought—when Miss Ormsbee approaches from the rear—as she speaks the minister seems greatly startled—*)

(*Enter Miss Ormslee from stage entrance near P. O.*)

MISS ORMSBEE—I beg your pardon, I did not intend to disturb you. You seemed to have been in deep thought. Possibly working out our next Sunday's sermon? Perhaps a theme on entertaining strangers unawares would be suggestive? But to change the subject, would say, that in crossing the green, I picked up this letter which you no doubt dropped.

NEWCOMMER—Thank you, Miss Ormsbee. I think it belongs to me, sit down a minute until I read it, then we will go home together (*Miss Ormsbee is seated*). It is from the church at Benton, they have extended me a call to become their pastor, and the offer is a most flattering one.—Had I better accept?

MISS ORMSBEE—Oh, you know better than I do. I—We would dislike to have you leave us, but if it is for your advantage, then I should certainly say go (*Aside*). (*If he goes to Benton he will be away from the Tompkins part of the time*)

NEWCOMMER—I have been here—Let me see—some three years and more—It seems hardly possible, the time has passed quickly—There have been a few changes—Some have died—Some married—A few added to the church roll.—On the whole, I hardly feel as if I had been a success. Others would have done better, and I am not satisfied with my work here. Were it not for one or two things I would go.

MISS ORMSBEE—Why don't you take Miss Tompkins with you? That would remove one of the objections.

NEWCOMMER—That is a little more than I had expected from you. You, for whom I have always had the best of regards and wishes, and I fail to see your motive for the sarcasm. But I think I will take your advice, and—

MISS ORMSBEE—And take Miss Tompkins with you?

NEWCOMMER—Hardly that, but accept the church offer.

MISS ORMSBEE—But Mr. Newcommer, as the contents of your letter are a surprise to me, perhaps I in return can surprise you.

NEWCOMMER—Why, what news have you that will prove so alarming?

MISS ORMSBEE—Well, I have received an offer of a position at Benton and as I had nothing here so attractive, but what I could leave it, I, of course, accepted the place and will endeavor to take my departure within a few days or so.—Won't you miss me just a little?

NEWCOMMER—Of course, we will all miss you, how could we help it? How pleasant it would be should I decide to accept the offer, to have you a member of mf congregation at Benton. I suppose you will follow teaching, same as usual.

MISS ORMSBEE—No, sir; I am to be a correspondent clerk in the banking room of Mr. E. C. Henderson, a place Mr. Hammer secured for me. Isn't it fine to think Ben has done so nicely? He has been promoted to chief

clerk now.—Well, I must be going or your lady friend across the way will be jealous. Are you going with me?

NEWCOMMER—No, I think I will sit here a while longer, there are some things I wish to think over. Good-bye. (*Exit Miss Ormsbee.*) Well, it seems as if I was a target for some people, and that young lady certainly made one of me, she hit near the mark.—Things seem sort of mixed up this morning. It's Hanford,—Tompkins,—Ormsbee, and I don't know how many more, and neither do I care. I suppose some people would swear at such times, possibly they find relief, but I hardly think it, and don't think I will commence at this late day (*Enter Hanford, looking towards Tompkins*). Why, who is that?—Well, if that is not that Hanford back again. Probably hard for him to break away.—Think I will be going home (*Goes to his home at the widows*).

(*Enter Tompkins*)

TOMPKINS—(*From the store stoop*) Hello, Hanford—back again, I see. What's up? (*Walks over to where the others are*)

(*Enter Amanda, enter Sarah, from house*)

HANFORD—Nothing much, only when about a mile or more out of town, the axle of the stage broke, and we all had a nice tumble. No, I didn't get hurt much, will be all right in a day or so. Much obliged for your sympathy But I don't think I shall need any plasters—Do you know, that since I came here I have been thinking how nice it would be for me if I only could remain for a couple of months with you. I must get out into the country, at least my physician says so.

AMANDA—Why, perhaps so. We have taken city boarders afore this. I'll talk it over with Pa and see what he says (*Tompkins has now returned to the store*). I'll step over and see him. Let's all go over.

(*All cross over to the store. Mrs. Tompkins and Mr. Tompkins talk it over*)

Well, we'll try and keep you for a while.

HANFORD—I thank you very kindly for your offer, which I will accept, and as I like to be busy I will take hold and help you out in the store—be your clerk—Possibly I could fill that wonderful Hammer's place. How would that suit you?

TOMPKINS—Fine, fine, jess what I want, and you'd better git into the harness rite away. We'll make it go together all rite.—Now, you see, I have got tew go down to Bosting tew be gone for three or four days, or so. Sarah and you will have to run the store together, Sarah she'll tell you the prices, and you luk out for the back room.

(*Exit Amanda and Sarah to their home*)

(*Exit Tompkins to store*)

HANFORD—Well, this is luck, a store and a fine looking young lady clerk on my hands.—All within a day. I'll own the store and have a claim on the young lady inside of two months.—This is a good place for me to stay, and my disguise will never be known.—Ha!—Ha!—my Baltimore friends you'r outwitted this time.—Hanford is a real pretty name, I rather like it better than my own. Think I will keep it for a while.—Well, I can't be idling this way. Oh! I'll make the old man a fine son-in-law.——Some orders to fill

(*reads from memo. book*). Widow Stopwell, one bushel potatoes (*takes a peck basket and goes over to Mrs. Stopwell's, knocks*)

(*Enter Mrs. Stopwell to her door*)

Here are the potatoes you ordered.

WIDOW S.—How many have you?

HANFORD—One bushel.

WIDOW S.—One bushel!—You had better take them back. I see you don't know a peck measure from a bushel basket. A very good man for Tompkins, but a poor one for his customers.

(*Exit Widow Stopwell to her house*)

(*Hanford returns to the store*)

HANFORD—Well, I don't blame the old lady, I must be somewhat rattled, but it's not strange. For I have a great load on my mind to carry. I wish I had done differently, but it's too late now.

(*Exit Hanford to the store*)

(*Hanford is supposed to have been at the store and in the town for some five months or more*)

(*To show the lapse of time the curtain can be dropped for a short space of time*)

CURTAIN.

Act Three

Scene same as Act II—Not to exceed two minutes duration between Act II and Act III.

ACT III.

(*Enter Tompkins from side street towards store*)

(*Enter Goodall from the store, carrying bundle in his hands, loosely tied, with articles coming out of it.*

DEACON GOODALL—I don't think that clerk of yours is a mite better than the last one you had, and the land knows, he was bad enough. Look at this bundle if you wish to see artistic work. Seems as if he had been here long enough now to know a thing or two.—Let's see, Tompkins, how long has he been here?

TOMPKINS—He cum here 'bout the fust of the summer, and it's now towards cold weather. Why, he must bean here nigh on tew six months, or so.—He's a bright sort of a feller, if he didn't git the string on tew your bundle just rite.—Does all business for me, jest as well as I'd dew it myself.

DEACON GOODALL—Well, I am glad you take to him as well as you do, but Tompkins, keep one eye on him, that's my advice to you (*Exit Goodall to road, left*).

TOMPKINS—That old Goodall is allers puttin' himself in where he ain't wanted.—He needn't worry 'bout my business, I'll tend to it myself.—Letterbee says he's an old fossil, and I gess he's 'bout rite.

(*Exit Tompkins to the store*)

(*Enter Hanford from the store, seats himself on bench in front of store*)

HANFORD—It hardly seems possible that I have been in this forsaken place five months or more, but it's a pretty good place for me to stay, and I'll stop here as long as I can.—I don't see what has come over the young lady of late. She does not seem to treat me as she did when I first came here.—I will have to propose soon, or my chances will be rather slim.

(*Entch Sarah from her home, going towards store*)

Here she comes, I'll make the attempt now. It may be my downfall, but I'll try it.—Good afternoon, Miss Sarah! I was this moment thinking of you.

SARAH—May I inquire as to the nature of your thoughts?

HANFORD—Sit down on the bench and I will tell you (*Miss Tompkins is seated as requested*). Well, I was thinking that I did not see as much of you as I did when I first came here. You seldom come to the store, and are quite distant when I meet you at home.

SARAH—I was not aware but what I treated you with utmose respect, and I know of no good reason why I should not so continue.

HANFORD—Yes, I know—but I think you seem different now than when I first came here. Now, Miss Sarah, I have longed for this opportunity and

I have something which I wish to say to you.—Will you not come into the store?

SARAH—(*Arising*) No, I prefer to remain here and you may proceed.

HANFORD—It is now some five months or more since I came here and since I first met you. I can assure you that it has been a most pleasant part of my life, which I shall always remember with the kindest of thoughts.—From the very first I saw you in this store I loved you. Thinking that others were the better entitled to that pleasure, I tried hard to forget you but the more I endeavored to do so the deeper I found myself in love with you, until you were constantly before me and ever on my mind, and I must confess that I love you as dearly as life itself. Trusting that it is acceptable to you, and now Miss Sarah, I—

SARAH—Sir—I fail to understand you, and think I have listened to all I wish to hear.

HANFORD—But, Miss Tompkins, I wish you to hear me through first. Will you not?

SARAH—Well, proceed, if you must.

HANFORD—I have remained here thinking the time would come when I might claim you as my wife, and so I now ask you if I cannot have that pleasure?

SARAH—(*Excited*) Why, Sir, the audacity I have not before listened too.—It is an insult, but on my father's account I forgive you, but it must not be repeated.

(*Sarah starts to go home, leaving Hanford, who enters the store*)

(*Enter Newcommer from street in rear of post office*)

NEWCOMMER—Well, Miss Tompkins, you seem somewhat excited, evidently something on your mind which troubles you; shall I not accompany you home?

SARAH—Yes—No—I don't think I am excited. Why, yes I would be pleased to have your company.

(*They cross the green together towards Tompkins house*)

I am not excited but mad through and through. The boldness of some people is surprising and unbearable, and I will not stand it any longer.—No, I cannot tell you, I wish I could—do not ask me.

(*Now at Tompkins' house*)

NEWCOMMER—Miss Sarah, I am sorry for you, as I think I am aware of some of the trouble you are laboring under, and I wish I could help you out of your difficulties. Perhaps I could were you to allow me to do so.—Sarah, I have long wished to have a talk with you as I have on my mind a few words I would be pleased to have you listen to.—Since we first met at the Fourth of July picnic, we have been the best of friends.—Our walks, our drives and our fishing trips have been to me moments of pleasure and made life worth living. The remembrance of which has been cherished never to be forgotten. It was on one of these walks that you picked from our pathway a simple flower—a violet—Sparkling with the dew of heaven and sweet with the fragrance nature gave it. Placing it in the button hole of my coat bade me wear it.—I obeyed, and when I took it from where you placed it

pressed it between the leaves of a much thought of book. Keeping it as a token of friendship which I hoped would some day ripen into true love and affection for the one who had cared so tenderly for it.—It was not because the flower was different from others, that it became so prized. Not because the drives and walks were where the handiwork of the Supreme reigned in all its glory.—Where the hills, the stream and the meadows alike were so beautiful, and nature in all its forms complete. But because of the company with whom I was so pleasantly associated.—One whom I not only respected but dearly loved. Longing to call my own, and as a companion to walk with hand in hand through the vicissitudes of life.—Could I but have that pleasure my fondest hopes would be realized and my happiness complete.—Sarah, it is you who has been the attraction, you who has made Silentdale a heaven to me.—It is you I wish for a wife, a companion, and as such can you not consent to be?

SARAH—Oh, Mr. Newcommer! I am sorry you asked me that question, for I cannot now give you an answer.—I respect you, I—I—I—no you do not understand me, so you must not press me for an answer.—If circumstances were different; if father was—but Oh! I cannot tell you.

NEWCOMMER—Very well, Miss Sarah, I will respect your wishes.. Good-bye.—

(*Exit Newcommer to Widow Stopwell's house*)

(*Exit Sarah to her own home*)

(*Enter Hanford from the store*)

HANFORD—That was somewhat of a turndown I received, but I expected it, it's always that way at first.—I'll win out in the end.—The old man's on my side and that's a good card if I play it well.—But there's one thing that's got to be done if I succeed, and that's to get rid of that young minister. He's a—nuisance around here and the quicker he's away the better it will be for me.—Let me see—Let me see.—How will I fix him—I have it. I will send for Bill Manns. Think he can help me out of it.—Guess I have pulled the till for enough cash to pay him. (*takes note book from his pocket, tears out a leaf and writes*)

Dear Mr. Manns.

I wish to see you soon. Come down to the store as soon as you can do so and help me out. Big money for little work.

HANFORD.

That sounds well. Dear Mr. Manns; did you ever hear of such sweetness? —Now, if there is a boy in sight I will send the note up to him (*Enter boy*). Here's one now. Here boy, take this note up to Bill Manns' hut, I will pay you when you return. Be quick about it (*Exit boy*). Now, with him out of the way. I don't care how he does it. I'm too sharp to get caught myself, been there before.—Now, with him out of the way, I will simply step in claim the beautiful young lady and steal the old man's property.—But if Manns should say no, then what? But he won't—at least I'll run the chances. Why, here he's coming now (*Enter Bill Manns, road left*). Hello, Bill! You got here sooner than I expected—sort of a smart kind of a chap, Hey! Hey, my boy? (*Hanford seems glad to see Bill. They are soon seated on the bench in front of the store*)

MANNS—Yas, I war 'bout dawn har when I met the bye and I jest hurried up a little, as I didn't know but had a fit on and you wanted me to bring you out of it. (*Ha, Ha, Ha, laugh*).

HANFORD—Well, Bill, what I wanted to see you about is this man Newcommer, the minister.—Now, you see there is a nice lot of property here.—Tompkins getting old and I could easily have all he has, but in order to do so I must marry the girl, Sarah, which you see I cannot do unless I get rid of this fool minister, but that I cannot do alone.—Now, I want you to just tap him on his head. Just so that he will be able to do business in a foreign country. It will not take much nerve to do it. You have the stuff in you for it all right. You see it's not hard work, as I wrote you.—What do you think? Will you do it?

MANNS—No, sir, I won't and thar's the end on it. Why, that man's the best friend I ever had in all my life.—We have fished and hunted many a day together and he's a man, every inch of him. I wouldn't harm a hair of his head—and you, you ought to be thrown into the pond for ever thinking such a thing.—If that's what you want me for I can say to you good-bye for allers. Big pay for little work (*starts to go, as if angry*)

HANFORD—Here—Here—Here—Come back a second—Come into the store for a minute. I have some hot stuff in a cold barrel that will do you good, and I want you to try it (*aside*) (*Guess I can fix him all right*).

MANNS—Well, I don't car if I jess luk at it.

(*Exit to store Hanford and Manns*)

(*They go into the store quickly, returning, Manns well intoxicated*)

(*Re-enter Hanford and Manns*)

HANFORD—Pretty good stuff, old fellow. What do you think?

MANNS—Glorious, glorious. Hoora for Tompkins and his hot stuff in a cold barrel.—Jest let me give a war whoop. Whooper up.

HANFORD—About that we were talking? See this, Bill? (*takes a roll of bills from his pocket, shows it to Bill*) How would you like to take this home with you. Hey, old boy?

MANNS—I'd like it, t'would carry me through the winter, and it's getting cold already—Jest let me put my hands on it.

HANFORD—Let us fix it up about the minister, perhaps we can. What do you say?

MANNS—Well, go ahead with your proposition.

HANFORD—Well, as I told you, I want you to get this minister out of the way, and if you will do the job, why here's fifty dollars to bind the bargain, and a hundred dollars more when the job's done.—Little work and big money. How's that suit you now?

MANNS—I don't want to do the job, but I kin accommodate you, I guess.—War's your money?

HANFORD—(*Hands him some Confederate bills. Bill looks at them closely*)

MANNS—See har, this Confederate money no good around har. And didn't you know this ere Federal bank of Baltimore is busted. Some cracks got in, shot the watchman, blew up the bank and got all thar was in it. The

minister read it to me at the time of it, and he said that there was big money offered for the bugglars arrest and I have been luking for the man that done it. You don't suppose he's any whar round har, do ye?

(*Hanford seems greatly startled at this information but quickly turns it off*)

HANFORD—(*Aside*) (*Heavens, is it true that this is known up here in this forsaken spot; if so, think I had better keep rather shady, and I had better burn these bills at once*). Why, I know it. I gave you the wrong bills. I'll get some others out of my desk inside (*aside*) (*there is seventy dollars in the drawer, I can take fifty all right, the old man will never miss it*).

(*Steps into the store and gets the bills, returning quickly*)

Here, these will suit you better.—Oh, take them, don't be so chicken-hearted—Take this bottle home with you, it will be nice for an inside bath. Hey, old boy! Cheer up now, old fellow! Don't squeal now. Show you have got some sand about you.

MANNS—I'll do it 'cause I said I would, and when Bill Manns says a thing, he'll do it.—His word is as good as gold.—I won't lie, I'll fix him for you and you have the hundred ready, 'cause I'll be arter it in a day or so.—No, I won't—hars your money—I don't want it—

(*Gives the bills a throw and quickly makes a grab and picks them up*)

Yas, I will—You see, it's mighty windy and I came near loosing this ere money—Good-bye, Hanford.

HANFORD—Good-bye, Bill.

(*Both shake hands—Slow curtain*)

Act Four

Scene 1—Street scene in Benton.

Scene 2—Interior of Tompkins' residence at Silentdale.

(*Enter Miss Henderson and Miss Ormsbee, right*)

(*Enter Hammer, left*)

..(*Hammer supposed to be on his way to the banking house of Henderson, where he is employed. Meets the ladies on the street, they being out shopping. Enters reading notice of court decision*)

BEN—Good morning, ladies. Am pleased to see you this bright morning.

ETHEL HENDERSON—Yes, we thought of a few articles we wished to take with us on our trip, which we had nearly forgotten, and so are out making our purchases.—I think we shall have a most delightful time.—It is such a beautiful ride, and we have a perfect day for it.

MISS ORMSBEE—I shall enjoy it as much as either of you, as it is nearly six months since I came here. It will seem good to set my foot in Silentdale once more.—Yes, I like it here ever so much, and would dislike to settle down there again, but I had many a warm friend there and shall enjoy seeing them so much.—Say, Ben! Don't it seem funny to think our old friends, the Deacon and the Widdow, are to marry?

BEN—I don't know.—I thought before I came here that the Deacon was casting eyes that way, and the Widdow, she always had a good word for him.—I shall never forget how the Deacon used to shew her old turkey home, how careful he was with it. "Step forward," he would say. It could get into his garden and scratch everything up. It was just the same.—But if Tompkins' hens got in there, things were most decidedly different, and the hens went over the fence as if they were at a hurdle race, and the way the Deacon wuld talk about those "tarnal hens"—Oh, we had a pretty good time up there, didn't we? and I don't blame you for wishing to look at the place once more. I do myself. —I only hope Miss Henderson that you and your father will enjoy it equally as well. It will do him good to get away from the office.

ETHEL HENDERSON—Oh, we will, I know, for I had such a lovely time when up there with you last summer, and father, he knows nearly all of the people there, they do business with him, you know. He is as pleased to go as a boy would be. What time are we to start?

BEN—At one o'clock sharp. So be ready, both of you.

MISS ORMSBEE—Don't you worry. We will not keep you waiting (*all say good-bye and separate*)

(*Exit Miss Ormsbee, right*)

BEN—(*calls to Miss Henderson*) Miss Henderson—just a minute, please (*Miss Henderson leaves Miss Ormsbee, who passes off the stage, returning to Hammer*). Say, Ethel, do you know that I am the happiest this morning of all my life?

ETHEL HENDERSON—I thought you looked unusually happy, but thought it was because you were going home.—Tell me your good news. Won't you?

BEN—Well, Ethel, I have just received word from the Judge of the Court that I had a decision in my favor, and there is no appeal from it. So Mr. Tompkins will be obliged to turn over the house, the rest of the property besides paying me for the use of it. Don't it seem too good to be true, to think I have my old home again? I will have it repaired and put in the best of order, and it will make such a delightful summer home.—But there is one thing more wanted to make my happiness complete, and that is you.—You know I love you dearly and would sacrifice all for you, and if you would only consent to be my wife I would be the happiest being in Benton. So I ask you will you not consent?

ETHEL HENDERSON—Oh, Ben! I am so glad you have your old home again, as I know it has been the desire of your life. But as to my becoming your wife, why Ben, I—I—I.—I will tell you when we get to Silentdale this afternoon. That will answer, will it not? No! If I should say yes, would that make you feel better?—Well, yes, Ben, you dear boy, if it will make you feël happier, as your happiness is mine.—But you ought to be ashamed of yourself for making love on the street.

BEN—Never mind the street, but Ethel, your answer has made me the happiest being in existence. Good-bye.—Yes, you may tell Ruth about the house.—Oh, yes! about the other if you wish.

(*Exit Ethel Henderson, right, exit Hammer, left*)

CURTAIN RISES.

SCENE 2.

(*Interior of the Tompkins' home--Tompkins sitting at a table, right*)

TOMPKINS—(*Holds letter in his hand*) Well, a decision of the court has been reached, and it's final.—Hammers won out and I must hand over the property besides paying him a good round sum of money.—I can give him the property but I can't pay the money.—Everything I have is as if it were in a leaky boat, ready to sink—and how can I save it.—The store will soon be closed and all I will have left will be this old home, and I doubt if I can keep even this much longer.—My only salvation is for Sarah to marry Hanford—but she don't like him—but perhaps she will. I'll talk it over with her. Sarah, you there?

(*Enter Sarah, left 2*)

SARAH—Yes, I was getting things ready for our party, for you know, I have invited the people at Mrs. Stopwell's over. There will be—Ben—and Ruth—Miss Henderson and her father—besides the Deacon and his intended; —so we will have a pleasant time, won't we? You close the store up early so as to be with us.—We will have a little dance. Letterbee said he would come over and play his violin for us, and we will have a grand time.

TOMPKINS—Sarah, I want tew talk with you once more about Mr. Hanford—Now, I think he's sech a nice man, I like him and I can't see why you don't—You know he would like to marry you—He seems to have money, which I need. Business is agin me and everything looks dark and I don't

know how I shall be able to save anything.—The help which he would give were he your husband, would keep me from ruin.—Won't you do it for me?

SARAH—Father, as much as I love you I could not do it.—I would rather see you loose every cent you have than to be married to him, and with these hands, and with the education you so kindly gave me, I would work and toil week in and week out for you and mother, as I know we would all be happier than to have that scoundrel as my husband.

TOMPKINS—How do you know he is sech a bad picture as you make him?

SARAH—Father, I think he is deceiving you—He is not the moneyed man you think.—Here he has been all summer and not a single cent has he paid for his board or lodgings. He has done nothing but live on you, and if I must say it, I think the money in your drawer would have been greater if you had handled it yourself.

(*Hanford is seen standing at the doorway listening, center*)

TOMPKINS—Sarah, Sarah, you must not talk so.

SARAH—But, my dear father, let me tell you, he knows well your financial condition, but why does he stay—Simply thinking the time would come when I would come into possession of the thirty thousand dollars which grandmother left me and which will come into my hands some three years hence. He thinks that he may still by his flatter of you be able to claim me as his wife. But let me tell you that time will never come. I would rather be sleeping beneath the willows in yonder church yard than to be his bride (*weeps*)

TOMPKINS—There. There, Sarah, you are excited.—Don't cry.

(*Exit Tompkins and Sarah, left 2*)

(*Both walk off the stage—Tompkins with his arm around Sarah*)

(*Enter Hanford*)

(*Hanford, who has been standing listening at the door, now enters*)

HANFORD—(*Comes down stage*) Some fine amateur theatricals, I see—Rather fair acting—but it needs the villian to make it a success—(*sits at table, picks up a book, looks through quickly*) Thirty thousand dollars in the air. Hey—That's news—much obliged for the information—guess it's worth waiting for, and they'll find me here for a while longer—Big board bill staring me in the face—that's easy. Why, down South we just wipe those out and start new, and I guess I can do the same here—I don't see what has become of Bill Manns—Thought he'd had the minister under the willows before this.—Under the willows—weeping ones I suppose—well, something will weep one of these days and it won't be the willows either.

(*Enter Tompkins*)

TOMPKINS—(*Now entering the room*) Hanford, I have jess bean talking to Sarah a lettle, but she's pretty stubborn yet.—You know these girls are most all that way. It takes a long time tew git notions out of their heads.

HANFORD—Don't get discouraged and don't overdo it. Just leave it to me a while longer and it will come our way. You see, in some cases it takes time and perseverance to accomplish results, and so in this case, with a little

more time (*which I have*) I think it will come out all right. So don't worry.—

(*Enter Amanda, right 2*)

AMANDA.—Azariah, Azariah.. You'r getting quite deaf lately, and you'd better have your ears looked arter, fore it's tew late. Letterbee jest sent up word that the strings tew his bow had busted and he's going over to the barn, to pull a few hairs out the old white hoss'es tail.—Now, Azariah Tompkins you had better go out to the barn jest as quick as you can, for you know jest what will happen if he gits there fust, and if he does there won't be any music at Tompkins' tonight. Mr. Hanford, you had better go along tew, cause it may need both of you to bring him hum (*Exit Tompkins and Hanford, right 2*)

(*Amanda setting the furniture in order for the party*)

(*Noise must be made to represent horse kicking Letterbee*)

AMANDA—I suppose that the folks will be here soon and I'll jest pick up a little. What on airth ails that niggar? (*Sam is heard laughing*)

(*Enter Sam, right 2*)

SAM—(*Still laughing hard*) Ha—Ha Ha—Ha— Ha—Ha—Ha—

AMANDA—Sam, for goodness sake, what ails you—Will you stop your laughing—(*Sam still laughing hard as ever*) You niggar, if you don't stop your nonesense I'll shake you till you'r white.

SAM—I'se no niggar. I'se just as white as that fool Hanford am (*breaks out in a hearty laugh again*) Misses Tompkins, did you hear the 'splosion?

AMANDA—No, Sam, what was it?

SAM—It was jess am dis, dat Letterbee war down in de barn pulling hairs out of old Bill's tail, when dar was an advance backward and the 'splosion occurred, and Massa Letterbee went through the side of the barn. Oh, yes, Misses, he'll be to the party but you won't know him when you sees him.

AMANDA—Well, Sam, I am glad that we'll have the music tonight—but did he get hurt much?

SAM—No, Missus, he done just got shook up some, but he'll knowed better next time.

(*Exit Sam, laughing, right 2*)

AMANDA—Well, I am real glad he didn't get hurt much, cause if he'd got killed we'd had to gone without our letters for a long time, but I suppose Deacon Goodall would have taken the job as hes been looking for it for a good while, but Letterbee's got a hold on it yet.—I wonder what that letter be that Azariah's bean reading so much today? Something's gone wrong and he's worrying a deal 'bout it, I knowed it by his looks. He can't fule Amanda Tompkins, but he orter confide more in his lawful wife.—Sarah, you 'bout ready? 'Cause it's 'bout time for the folks to be cummin' and you orter be here to receive them, and I jess wan't to arrange my tie-let a lettle.

(*Enter Sarah, left 2*)

SARAH—Yes, I am ready now, mother, and you can finish your dressing.

AMANDA—Sarah, you come pretty nigh not having any music tonight.

L. OF C.

Letterbee went fooling around the old white hoss in the dark—but Sam says he'll be here to play.

(*Exit Amanda, right 2*)

SARAH—I was in hopes that we would have a most enjoyable time tonight, but I hardly feel in the spirit of it at present—I will try to look as if I were happy and they will be none the wiser.—At heart I am sad, sad. The world, which once looked bright and pleasant, now seems dark and void. The cloud hovering over this house must soon engulf us all within its mists of despair. My poor parents! What will become of them.—My poor father, blind to the truth, still believes that Hanford a saint, and is doing all he can to convince me I am wrong and should marry him. Must I do it? No, never.—I do not see what has become of Mr. Newcommer, I hardly see him except on Sundays, in his pulpit. I do hope he has not forgotten me, for that would break my heart. I love him and can not help it. Soon he is to leave here and go to Benton, then I shall seldom see him. Miss Ormsbee, she too is there, possible they may become as friendly as they were before I came home.—Only for the encouragement I receive from Mrs. Stopwell I would hardly care what became of me, but the dear old soul tries hard to cheer me up.

(*Enter Hanford, right 2*)

HANFORD—Good evening, Miss Sarah, all ready for the party I see, and if you will allow me I must say you never looked as sweet in all your life (*Sarah turns her back on him*) There can no longer be any doubts as to who is the best looking young lady in Silentdale.—Sarah, I am only sorry that you will not reconsider and say that you will become my bride, as you know I love you as dearly as life, again I ask you, will you not?

(*As he says the last few words he endeavors to place his arm about her waist*)

SARAH—Mr. Hanford, this I must consider an insult. You have had my answer before and it is unnecessary to again repeat it. If you have not before understood me you certainly had a grand opportunity when you were listening at that door to the conversation between my father and myself, as I saw your reflection in the glass. Something a gentleman would not be guilty of, but I am not surprised, I expect anything from you.

(*Bell rings*) (*Sarah steps to the door and allows the visitors to enter*)

(*Enter center door, Mr. Henderson, Miss Henderson, Deacon Goodall, Widow Stopwell, Miss Ormsbee and Ben Hammer.—Sarah shakes hands and welcomes all except Mr. Henderson, whom she has not met before. Hammer steps quickly to the rescue, making the introduction*)

(*Henderson also endeavors to make himself agreeable with all*)

BEN—Pardon me, Miss Tompkins, I think I shall have to be the one to break the ice, Mr. Henderson—Miss Tompkins. I supposed you were acquainted long ago.

HENDERSON—I am pleased to meet you, Miss Tompkins. Miss Ormsbee and Mr. Hammer have spoken of you so many times that already I felt myself acquainted with you.

SARAH—I trust we may meet often during the evening, and that you

will enjoy yourself (*Enter Tompkins and Amanda, right 2*) Here is mother and father, you are acquainted with them, I believe?

HENDERSON—Yes, we are old acquaintances.

(*Sam is in and out as he sees fit*)

(*Tompkins, Hanford and Amanda near front of stage—Henderson joins them*)

AMANDA—Ben's dewing pretty well, ain't he, Mr. Henderson?

HENDERSON—I am pleased to say that he is. I consider him an ideal young man and I prize him highly. He certainly is a success thus far and I am glad to know that you raise such bright boys in Silentdale.

AMANDA—That's jest what I been sayin' to Azariah, but somehow he and Hanford don't seem tew think so; Azariah, he sorts of dislikes Ben 'cause he sued him about the old house, but if Azariah had gone 'cordin to scripture there would have been no sech work, and Ben would had what belonged to him without all the fuss. The golden rule ain't a bad thing to go by at sech times (*Hammer now joins the party—Amanda and Henderson withdraw to one side, leaving Hammer, Tompkins and Hanford together*).

TOMPKINS—Well, Hammer, I 'spose you fell mighty smart, now you have got the old hum back again. It's prutty near ready to fall in and I don't think you will find it much of an heir loom. Hardly fit for a barn, but you got in sech a hurry and said I was robbin' you, so I jess thought I would let you fight it out and get it if you could. I'd gin it tew you if you had only waited.

HANFORD—I do not think, Mr. Hammer, that you treated Mr. Tompkins quite right, hardly showed the respect due him.

BEN—Mr. Hanford, to you I would say that you are not in a position to critisize and I do not think it is anything concerning you, and Mr. Tompkins I would say that if you will recall the answer you wrote to my first letter you will probably notice that it sort of conflicts with the statement you have just made, but we are not here to have differences, so we will not discuss the subject any more tonight (*They now separate*).

(*Miss Henderson, Miss Ormsbee and Sarah are together in a group*)

SARAH—Mrs. Stopwell, where is Mr. Newcommer? All are here but him—He said he would be sure to come.

WIDOW S.—He expected to have been here with us, but the old lady Thurston, who lives up beyond, is very low and sent for him. He said he would be here as soon as he could, and that he was sorry for the delay.

SARAH—I hope he will be able to come. I will send Sam up after him with the team.

ETHEL HENDERSON—I suppose we will have your Mr. Newcommer as our pastor soon, I think he bids farewell here next Sabbath, but I presume you will dislike to loose him.—I will invite you all down to Benton some Sunday, take lunch with us, go to church, hear your old pastor preach, also Ruth sing, perhaps it will make you think of Silentdale. If the minister does his part preaching as well as she does singing he will be a success, for she certainly does her part to perfection.

MISS ORMSLEE—Be careful, Ethel, I am afraid you are overdoing it a

little, for I am not the ideal you make me.

SARAH—Your speaking of singing suggests a song here, some old tune, one we can all sing.

ETHEL HENDERSON—Good. Let us try one. What do you say, Ruth?

MISS ORMSBEE—I am willing, if I do not have to sing any solos.

SARAH—We will not have any solos but some song we all know. Have one now while we are waiting for Letterbee. I suppose you know why he is delayed.—What do you say to our having a song?

Several—Good.

SONG.

(*Enter Letterbee, right 2, looking as if he had been injured, all notice him and break out into a laugh*)

LETTERBEE—I—I come here to give you some music, not to be laughed at, and I'll go back hum.

AMANDA—There, Sylvanus, don't get so riled. They'll stop their laughing if you will start to play. I am real glad you didn't get hurt much.

LETTERBEE—I don't know what you call gettin' hurt much, but I am prutty near dead and am as black all over as that darn nigger of yours.

(*All gather around Letterbee in a sympathetic way trying hard not to laugh*)

I'll stay, but you'll have to stop your laughing—for I'm darn touchy bout it, and Deak Goodall, I don't know as it's a mite wus gittin' kicked by a hoss than it is to git married. You can git rid of a hoss kick but you can't a wife. —If you'r all ready, take partners for the quadrille.

(*Ben and Ethel.*

Hanford and Amanda.

Deacon and Widow Stopwell form in)

TOMPKINS—Come, Henderson, you and Ruth got to jine in—Sarah and me 'll watch you this time, we'll be in it fore you git through.

DANCE.

(*Enter Sam, center door*)

(*During the height of the dance Sam rushes in as if scared and greatly excited, goes through several emotions before he can collect himself, dance stops suddenly and all seem interested as to the cause of Sam's outbreak*)

AMANDA—(*Catching hold of him and giving him a shake*) Sam, what's the matter with you? Are you hurt? Speak up.

SAM—No, Misses, I'se not hurt, but the Parson am, he am, and somebody say he am nearly dead.

WIDOW S.—Why, Sam, what is it?

SAM—Why, tey find him up by the "turn of the ribber" with his head all cut up and he can't say a word. He look jest like he am dead, and dey just done took him into your house.

(*Those belonging at Mrs. Stopwell's home start with a hurry for her home, (exit center door) leaving the Tompkins' people as if bewildered, Hanford seen standing with his back to the others and with a most satisfied expression upon his countenance*)

CURTAIN.

Act Five

Scene 1—Henderson's parlor at Benton.

(*Time since Act III, one year—Henderson's home at Benton—Parlor of Mr. Henderson—Henderson and Miss Henderson seated at table—Mr. Henderson with paper in his hand, Ethel with book in hers*)

HENDERSON—Ethel, I suppose tomorrow will be the happiest day of your life, as it will be your wedding day and it ought to be the brightest of them all.

ETHEL HENDERSON—And yours too, father. Will it not be a happy one for you?

HENDERSON—Yes, Ethel, it will, but with me it is different. You have had nothing to even cloud the happiness of your life. Everything has been bright to you, with nothing to mar a single pleasure. I am happy that it has been so and I trust it will so continue.—When I think of the days when I was a boy alone in the world, with not a single spot to call home. Working hard early and late, striving to earn a little to lay by for the education I was so anxious to acquire. Meeting with the ups and downs of business life, then I realize that my life has not been all the happiness the picture would make it.

ETHEL HENDERSON——Are you sorry that I am to marry? We will be here just the same.

HENDERSON—No, Ethel, I am not sorry but I am glad. Marriage is a part of life, without it life is a failure, and I am more than pleased that you have selected such a good and noble man for your husband. Be true to each other and happiness through life will be the result. The greatest blessing one can receive.—Ben has been with us some five years or more, coming here as a country boy with all his belongings in an old carpet bag, but with a heart overflowing with honesty and a head full of common sense. Willing to work and ever alert to the sense of duty.—He has put to shame those who ridiculed him and called him country. They are at the same desks today. This noon I informed them that commencing at once the firm would be known as Henderson & Hammer, as I have today made him an equal partner with me. He has well earned his promotion and is entitled to his reward.

ETHEL HENDERSON—Oh, father, how kind you are, and won't he be happy though. If he isn't I'll just pull his ears for him.

(*Ethel appears as very much elated*)

Father, you ought to be happy too, for I am so glad to think you are to marry Ruth, as I love her almost as much as you do yourself, and I know her to be a noble, Christian woman. Just the one to make you a companion, for you will be a little lonesome when I am married, and sometimes will need someone to cheer you up and make you smile, just so you won't have the blues over business cares, and Ruth will be just the one to do it. I am glad the minister did not marry her, I had rather you would.

HENDERSON—Yes, my daughter, she is all you picture her, and I believe her to be the ideal, and I know we will get along nicely together; even though it seems all happiness to us, yet we should not forget your dear mother who some five years ago we laid so gently and peacefully at rest. She was to me the dream, the realization of happiness.—Were she here tomorrow you would receive a mother's blessing, which now must come to you in spirit only. There. There, do not cry (*Ethel drops her head upon table and sobs—While Henderson wipes his eyes*) There, child, don't cry, I am sorry I made you feel so badly.

(*Enter Sam (center), now Henderson's butler, bringing in a satchel marked in large-sized letters, "Tompkins, Silentdale, Conn." and sets it down in a prominent place*)

SAM—Massa Henderson, Mr. Munroe, the stageman, say he just want to spoke to you, and dat he can't leave his colts to cum in.

(*Exit Henderson, center*)

ETHEL HENDERSON—Sam, how do you like it here in Benton?

SAM—Oh, Missus Henderson, I like it heah. Don't hab to done so much work as up at Tompkins', I jess hab to keep moving all the time up dar. Heah it am so easy that I gets asleep thinking what I'se gwine to do next.—Oh, yes, I like it heah.—I'se glad I'se gwine to see Ben married cause Ben and myself we's sort of chums up in Silentdale. Yes, and Ben he was always up to jokes, he was. Yes, 'em one day he say, "Ben, can you cotch a live mouse that's in the trap in your hand?" I says, I'se not aferd of any mouse I'se cotch him for you. Den he say, "Sam, you cotch de mouse and put it in Deacon Goodall's coat pocket, den we's see the fun, and so we did, and when the old man put his hand into his pocket for his 'kerchief den dis yer chile just thought was bout time to move, but Ben he just done nuthing but laff and laff till the Deacon done got mad and went home. Oh, yes, Ben, he likes fun. He do. I sort of 'spects I'se gwine to get married myself someday.

ETHEL HENDERSON—Who is to be the happy lady, Sam.

SAM—Miss Evelina Johnson am her name, and she am juss as putty as she looks.

ETHEL HENDERSON—Well, Sam, I only hope you will be happy. You remain here and attend to the door. I promised Ruth I would call for her. I will return soon.—Our Silentdale friends will be here soon and no doubt you will be glad to see them.

(*Exit Ethel, left 2 E*)

SAM—It am a lucky day when Ben took me heah.—do nuthing but eat and sleep and wear good clothes.—I'se a gemman, I am, and Miss Evalina Johnson, if you wish to retain me as your lubber you'es jus done got to put more style into your general appearance. But I'se sorry for the old Massa and Missus, deed I am—Dey's loss all and de sheriff say de old home got to go tomorrow (*Sam blubbers*) and I'se dunno what's will become of them. But I gess it am de only way dey will get rid of that Hanford.—He's already eat them up—He's a thief—He's a liar—He's a (*door bell rings*) (*Sam attends to the door. Announces visitors. Hammer enters from side entrance*)

(*Enter (center) Tompkins, Amanda, Sarah, Hanford, Deacon and Mrs. Goodall*)

BEN—I am glad to see you here—I was afraid something would happen so you could not all come, but you are all here and I am glad you are. Silentdale people have a warm place with me.

TOMPKINS—Did our setchel git here yit. We sent it down by the stage as thar wasn't room fur it with us.

BEN—Yes, it is here, and Sam will take it up to your room for you. Sam, show our friends to their rooms so they may lay aside their wraps.

AMANDA—Sam, you keep it right side up for Sylvanus got some linament in it and you might spill it. He's got the roomatism now.

HANFORD—Here, Sam, don't you know how to carry a satchel? Take it up this way—You don't know any more than you did. You are a niggar yet, I see

(*Sam looks at Hanford as if very ugly but says nothing*)

(*Exit Sam with grip, followed by Silentdale people*)

(*Exit right, 2 E*)

BEN—This is a happpy day for me. I little thought when I came here that I would be so fortunate, but I have worked hard and tried to do right.—Mr. Henderson has been very kind to me and now has given me his daughter.—I am sorry all cannot feel as happy as I do.—Poor Sarah, I am sorry for her, and I don't see why her father persists in keeping Hanford there. He worries Sarah and she may yet marry him to please her father, but I hope not—Ruth is happy too, and I am glad she has done so nicely—She is a prize for anyone.

(*Enter Sam, right 2*)

SAM—I'se glad Massa Hammer your's done so well, and I'se glad I'se here to see you get married, I'se will joy it, I will.

BEN—I am pleased to think you can be here, Sam, for we have been good friends and I never forget them. You stay here Sam.

(*Enters (right 2 E) Silentdale people as having returned from their rooms, where they have been to lay off their wraps*)

TOMPKINS—Wall, Sam, you luk mighty slick, you'll do as well as Ben if you stay here long enough.

HANFORD—He'll have to change his color a little first.

SAM—Yes, I may hab to change my color, but if I'se as black outside as some white people am inside, den I'se pretty dark colored, I am.

AMANDA—Sam, did you know Bill Manns is very sick and I gess thar's no hope for him—I heard say that he made some sort of a confession yesterday but no one seems tew know what it's about.

(*Hanford looks startled*)

SAM—That am bad, but if he dies someone else will have a chance to catch a fish or two in Snake brook.

(*Exit center door*)

(*Hanford motions to Tompkins to step aside, which he does*)

HANFORD—Mr. Tompkins, did you hear anything about Manns making some sort of a confession yesterday. I wonder what it was about.

TOMPKINS—Dunno, didn't hear a word 'bout it. Don't think he's got much to confess. He owes me five dollars. He could confess that if he wanted tew.—Parson Newcommer was up thar tew day and he may tell us 'bout it when he gits here tonite.

Enter left 2 E, Miss Ormsbee and Miss Henderson)

(*Shake hands and pleased to see all*)

AMANDA—Well, Ruth Ormsbee, if I ain't glad tew see you. It's a year ago since I seen you last.—How well you dew look. Does you good tew live down here, and Ruth you didn't catch the minister arter all, did you? I said all the time you wouldn't, but Letterbee said you would, but he don't git rite every time.

MISS ORMSBEE—I am feeling pretty well. I think Benton air agrees with me and I have no complaint to make.—As to Mr. Newcommer, I think you have the wrong idea. As to our being in love with each other.—I think the respect we had for each was mutual. He certainly treated me nicely and I in return endeavored to treat him in like manner.—He visited my school perhaps more than was necessary.—I possibly went walking and fishing with him more than I ought, and perhaps could have learned to have loved him.—I was young then, you know. But my best wish for him is to see him married to your Sarah, whom he loves better than all.

BEN—Mr. Tompkins, I have a few words I wish to say to you—You know that when I was a boy you treated me kindly. You gave me a place in the store, and I tried to be faithful to you. Mrs. Tompkins, you too were just as kind, and many were the times you would call me over to get a hot cruller, or a seed cake, just baked, how good they tasted. How kind you were to me after mother died.—These acts of thoughtfulness I appreciated and have never forgotten.—Mr. Tompkins—I sued you for the recovery of the old home, as it was dear to me and I thought it was right I should have it, and I am glad that I did so, for had I not it would now be in other hands. —You have met with misfortunes and tonight there is a load upon you heavy to carry, and I am well aware as to what it is, and I am going to try to lighten it a little—Yesterday there came into my possession this note, secured by a mortgage upon your home, which would have been foreclosed tomorrow, but I had it transferred to myself and I now hand it to you as cancelled and the old home is still Aunt Amanda's and yours (*offers mortgage papers*).

TOMPKINS—No Ben—I can't take it—It's dewing too much fur us—but Ben, I can't see Amanda leave the old hum.—It would break her heart and mine tew, and Ben—for her sake I'll take it (*takes papers*) (*breaks down*)—and Ben, I want tew tell my story—I did try to cheat you out of your old hum—I thought you wus a boy and wouldn't know the difference—but you did—and Ben, all I can say is that I thank you, and 'fore all these folks ask your forgiveness for the wrong I did you.

BEN—You were forgiven long ago, so don't worry about that.

AMANDA—Ben, I have got to give you a good motherly kiss. You'r a good boy, and I alers said it, and I only wish I had one of those seed cakes

for you now. If Azariah had lived up tew the golden rule like you have, Ben, things would have been different for us all.

SARAH—Ben, I can hardly give you a motherly kiss, but I wan't to thank you for your kindness. It will not be very long before I will be in a position to repay you for all you have done.

HANFORD—Mr. Hammer, I also would like to personally thank you for your extreme kindness, as I can assure you that I highly appreciate it.

BEN—Mr. Hanford. I hardly see why you are so much interested as the home, I trust, is for Mr. Tompkins and his family only.

(*Enter Mr. Henderson*)

(*Enter Henderson, center door*)

HENDERSON—(*Shakes hands and glad to see all*) I am happy to see my Silentdale friends here, sort of a reunion, and I think we will have to keep them up.—I shall have to apoligize for not being here when you arrived, but I was detained at the office. It is a year tonight since we were at Mr. Tompkins', and Deacon, tomorrow will be your wedding anniversary. I suppose you have got along nicely and are still in the honeymoon .

DEACON GOODALL—Yes, it will be, we had just spoken about it. We are getting along bravely, and as to the honeymoon—I think Mrs. Goodall will reply to that.

(*All laugh—laugh on the Deacon*)

MRS. GOODALL—I have no regrets to offer and am perfectly contented, as I trust you will be. I shall ask you the same question at our reunion a year from tonight (*laugh on Henderson*)—But don't you remember that a year ago tonight Pastor Newcommer was assaulted.—Poor fellow, how he did suffer, but where is he tonight?

(*Enter Sam, announces Newcommer*)

(*Enter Newcommer, center door*)

HENDERSON—A little late, but we are glad to see you, just the same.

NEWCOMMER—Yes, I am somewhat late, as usual, but the delay I think is excusable as I have the best of an apology to offer. I was at Silentdale today, and when about ready to start homeward one of the "Thurston twins" informed me that Bill Manns was sick and not expected to live. So I drove up to see the poor fellow, and am thankful I did so. My tardiness is chargeable to that trip.

AMANDA—Well, I am real glad you went up there as you may know something about his confession, and I am anxious tew larn about it.

NEWCOMMER—The evening sun was slowly sinking behind the western hills as I arrived at the old hut where he lay dying. His eyes were closed and he was breathing heavily. As I entered and spoke his name, his face brightened and he tried to extend his hand. "I'm glad you came Parson, I thought you would.—It won't be long before Bill Manns hits the long trail from which no one ever came back.—I know I ain't done all I ought to have in my life, Parson.—If she'd lived it would have been different."—Then he told me the story of his younger days. Of a girl he had loved and lost, and hope had died within him.—I tried to comfort him by telling him that she might be waiting for him on the other side of the river of life. At the words

River of Lif, he tried to raise himself and said: "That is what I wanted to tell you, Parson.—It was at the turn of the river that I—that I"—He gasped and could not speak, then slowly his eyes closed.—"Good-bye, Parson,—I'am—He sank backward and in another moment the spirit had taken it's flight, perhaps to meet its mate in Paradise.

HANFORD—(*Very much agitated*) (*aside*)—If Manns had done his job well, you would not have been here tonight with such a beautiful narrative. I only wish I had done it myself.

AMANDA—What dew you suppose Manns wanted tew say? Perhaps it was his confession.

HANFORD—(*Aside*) Think I had better make myself missing, looks as if it was going to be a little warm for me.—I'll not trouble Silentdale for some time and those very kind people will soon be wondering where their lamb has gone to.

(*Bell rings Sam attends the door*)

(*Enter officer, center door*)

HOLDUP—Mr. Henderson, I believe.—You will pardon me for the intrusion, but I have a duty to perform, which will interrupt you but a moment (*Hanford surmises and moves towards the door*). Mr. Hanford, one moment, please, I am compelled to arrest you as being an accomplice in the assault of Mr. Newcommer, as confessed by Manns yesterday.

HANFORD—(*With assumed ease*) Well, if that is not a fine joke.—Mr. Tompkins, I presume you will become bondsman for me?

TOMPKINS—No, sir.—I'll be darned if I will.

(*Hanford looks surprised that Tompkins should turn him down*)

HOLDUP—Mr. Hanford, I have a question I wish to ask you.

HANFORD—Well, you may. Something more about the confession, I suppose.

HOLDUP—Are you acquainted with—EVERETT SEARLES?

(*Hanford makes bold attempt to escape. Officer points revolver at him*) One step and you are a dead man.

(*Party all greatly alarmed and excited. Sam stands near Hanford with clenched fists*) I have papers for your extradition signed by the Governor of the State of Maryland, to answer to the robbery of the Federal Bank of Baltimore and the murder of its watchman (*Steps up and puts handcuffs on Hanford*)—Come.—

HANFORD—I am sorry to leave you—Hope you will have a most beautiful wedding—and Tompkins, trust you will enjoy Hammer's gift—Good-bye, Sarah, I hate to leave you, but the minister can take my place.—Bye-bye (*shakes his hand as he passes out*)

(*Exit Hanford and officer, center door*)

SAM—Good-bye to dat old rubbish—hope he'll done got de rope round his neck.

SARAH—(*Rushing to Mrs. Goodall and throwing her arms about her*) You are the real detective in the case and you have done your part well—You have saved us all and I love you dearly for it (*kisses her*).

MRS. GOODALL—Yes, Sarah, I do feel as if your life had been spared.—The very first I saw Hanford I was convinced he was not the gentleman he pretended to be, but was here under false pretense, which has now been proved to us.—I followed by letter each slightest clew obtainable until I finally succeeded in finding the right. Which has now saved you a life of misery and given him his just deserts.

NEWCOMMER—Miss Tompkins, is Mrs. Goodall the only person here?

SARAH—No—You are here too (*Sarah and Newcommer step towards each other and he embraces her by placing his arm about her waist*).

NEWCOMMER—One year ago tonight was the darkest of my life and the year through which I have passed has been one of torture to my mind.—But now the sunshine of happiness breaks through the clouds of despair, brightening into realms of peacefulness and bliss, which has at last reunited these souls with hearts beating with true love for each, and charity for all.

(*The positions during Newcommer's closing words should be Newcommer and Sarah in the center, Henderson and Miss Ormsbee on one side, Hammer and Miss Ethel Henderson on the other. The remainder of the party as they choose*)

CURTAIN.

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